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A CHALLENGE FOR NATO: IMPROVING CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

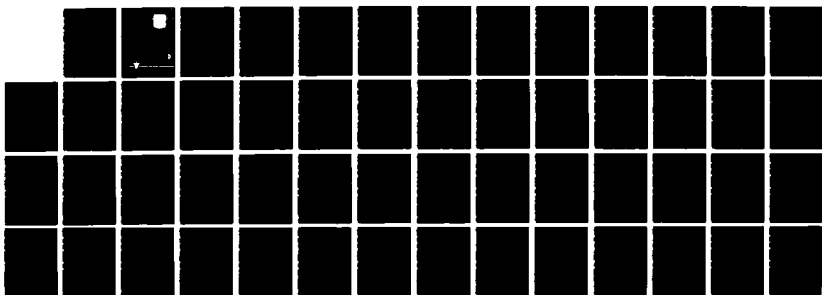
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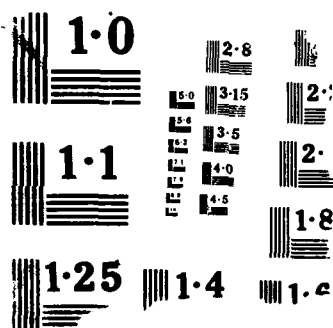
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A CHALLENGE FOR NATO: IMPROVING CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM R. LYNCH, III

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A CHALLENGE FOR NATO: IMPROVING CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

An Individual Study Project

by

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ABSTRACT

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The present thaw in US-Soviet relations, with the INF agreement as a centerpiece, poses a significant challenge for NATO. At a time of a reduced threat perception and a renewed debate on NATO policy, it has become increasingly more apparent that the US should take the lead in developing a sound NATO course for the future. As NATO comes to grips with a new Soviet foreign policy direction and style, it will be necessary to reassess NATO strategy. There may be a tendency to reduce defense spending based on a reduced threat perception. This is the worst course we could follow. The sound course is the development of a strong conventional defense which assures parity with the Warsaw Pact. A stronger conventional pillar can be part of a deterrent which compensates for theater nuclear deficiencies and accounts for continued force reductions. A key step to take is the development of a combined NATO doctrine at the operational and tactical levels. Finding the means for the strategy is not an insurmountable problem if NATO countries can develop a consensus to meet spending goals. The INF agreement will help to focus increased attention on the theater and strategic deterrent and the importance of improving conventional capability. As a result of analysis, it will be argued that the US should take the lead in building a consensus for a strong conventional defense and deterrence capability which is coupled to nuclear deterrence.

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A CHALLENGE FOR NATO: IMPROVING CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Something new is brewing in NATO. With great frequency Americans ask whether we should either reduce our commitment or sustain our vigilant and ready posture. Concurrently, Europeans speculate on US intentions. Both consider the impact of the recent and first agreement to seriously reduce nuclear weapons and the resulting potential for a significant reduction in cold war tension. Today these concerns and many others are bombarding the alliance as never before. For over forty years NATO has given western nations their most peaceful and prosperous modern era. Yet, as the last decade of this century draws near, one finds winds of change filling the sails of the previously becalmed NATO debate.

The reason for existence of the alliance has been a combination of the ominous Soviet threat and the willingness by the West to counter it. Thus, NATO has existed primarily to disallow the presumed Soviet goal of European domination. The foundation of Western defense has been the American nuclear guarantee and the forward deployment--rapid reinforcement of US conventional forces. In more recent years Europeans have contributed in greater measure as well. Because many people now perceive the threat to be diminishing, the wind has taken a definitive shift in a direction which makes possible such lofty goals as significant nuclear and conventional arms reductions.

Changes in alliance assumptions and a reassessment of US national strategy are leading to reconsideration of our force posture. The question is often asked whether we can afford forward deployment in Europe at a time when Third World events are far more threatening even in this hemisphere.

The recent US-NATO summit has underscored the importance of NATO issues while reaffirming our present course at least for the time being (1). Participation by the French President at the summit for the first time since 1966 reflects great concern over a too ready reaction by the West Germans and the alliance to take a new tack in the shifting wind. The French position along with a strong conservative posture by the British (e.g., advocating modernizing theater nuclear forces) indicates their concern not only for West German "neutralist" tendencies, but also for the US stance which some may see as wavering. This explains President Reagan's frequent and firm emphasis on a strong NATO defense, the US not pulling out, and an attack on Munich equals an attack on Chicago. Indeed, the March 1988 summit was called at least in part to reassure European NATO of the firmness of the US commitment (2).

At the vortex of the storm brewing change in Europe lies the brilliant strategy of Soviet Premier Michael Gorbachev, who has undertaken no less than a revolution from above in Soviet internal affairs and foreign policy. In Europe he has seized the propaganda initiative with a unilateral commencement of early withdrawal of SS20 missiles. A proposal for conventional arms cuts and the apparent

acknowledgement of Soviet conventional superiority are more dramatic examples of the Gorbachev initiative (3). It appears that perestroika and glasnost (restructuring and openness) are beginning to occur (albeit at a slow pace), and this is Gorbachev's significant achievement. What is yet to be seen is how far he will go, whether he can stay in power, and to what extent the threat really has changed. Some counsel wisely to beware of the "smiling Russian bear," and the recently appointed SACEUR, General John Galvin, has noted that glasnost has yet to bring any change in the Soviet military or in military production (4). Given this understandably cautious approach, one still cannot escape the potential we have for an historic change in East-West relations.

Other signs of change in NATO include increased French-German cooperation, the potential for successful strategic nuclear cuts during 1988 as part of START, and the measured movement toward a second European pillar of leadership in NATO. These factors must be considered as we chart a strategic course for the future.

CHAPTER II: A STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

Where does the new situation in NATO leave the United States? In an era of shifting winds, what course should our strategy take? This study will propose a strategy for NATO which accounts for a slightly diminishing Soviet threat while recognizing this situation as a brewing storm, a time for a certain caution which allows that the wind could change again. Like a well trimmed sloop in a rising storm, our strategy must be one which can respond to either direction in Soviet action. The key aspects of the proposed US-European strategy are as follows:

1. A strong NATO conventional defense pillar.

- A greater European role and contribution to defense.
- Conventional parity with the Warsaw Pact.
- Continued US forward deployment.
- Continued improvements in readiness, rapid deployment, reserves and sustainability.
- Development of a conventional doctrinal consensus.
- Allowance for balanced conventional reductions.

2. A balanced and reduced nuclear pillar.

- Continued strategic and intermediate nuclear agreements.
- Balanced theater nuclear reductions.
- A linkage from conventional defense to nuclear deterrence.

The goal is a conventional defense in which both sides lack the capability to launch a sudden or short scenario attack. NATO does not rely on nuclear weapons but has the capability to use them if vital interests are threatened.

It is believed that this strategy will allow NATO to follow a course which assures survival while satisfying the vital interests of all parties. The US desires to remain influential in Western Europe and to allow those countries to remain independent. The USSR desires to retain its influence over Eastern Europe and to retain socialist independence. Here we have a basis for agreement. If the USSR attempts to dominate or threatens Western Europe as suggested previously, we lose the opportunity for peace unless we can counter the force required to pursue such a policy. Therefore, NATO must follow a course which ensures strength and guarantees freedom but does not threaten the Warsaw Pact. A strategy based on conventional parity, which allows for reductions in conventional and nuclear forces, has the capacity to be attractive to the interests of both sides and is the best course for the next decade.

The means of the strategy is a greater total defense expenditure by NATO at a level called for by SACEUR. NATO ministers have previously agreed on these levels, but many countries have not met them. The key to the means is a true consensus from NATO members on a strong conventional deterrent. The challenge for NATO leaders is that the consensus is not currently present.

THESIS

The thesis of the paper is the object of the proposed overall strategy. As a result of the analysis , I will argue that the US should take the lead in building a consensus for a strong NATO conventional defense and deterrent capability which assures parity with the Warsaw Pact and is coupled to nuclear deterrence.

Six propositions which have been developed to support the thesis are now to be reviewed. They contain the more critical variables judged to be of some significant impact on the thesis.

PROPOSITIONS

P1) European NATO countries may be expected to continue political support of NATO. Despite the debate on defense policy and the inherent difficulty of achieving a consensus, NATO has the capability to provide a firm, unified response to Soviet actions or intentions.

P2) European NATO is economically capable of increasing defense capability but is unlikely to meet goals consistently. The US carries a disproportionate share of the spending burden, has met quotas but may not meet them in the future. Some European countries do better than others, often meet spending goals, and by measures other than spending they share the defense adequately. Current defense spending is unlikely to increase substantially, although moderate European increases are possible.

P3) The Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) agreement will affect NATO's tactical nuclear weapons strategy and increase its importance. This will resurface the debate on credibility and modernization. Achieving a consensus for improvement will be difficult. As a result, the likelihood of NATO seeking negotiated reductions is increased.

P4) The INF agreement, the tactical nuclear weapons debate and the perceived force imbalance will increase the value of the conventional deterrent. This will help cause renewed NATO efforts to correct the conventional imbalance. However, to make sufficient progress will require a NATO consensus, which will be difficult to achieve.

P5) A combined NATO conventional doctrine could further consensus for improved conventional forces as a key component of that doctrine. The application of a strong, conventional NATO defense doctrine, which assures parity with the Warsaw Pact and is linked to nuclear deterrence, could reduce crisis instability and improve overall NATO deterrence.

The above propositions contain several variables which act on one another and which support the thesis in the stated format. They are complex and this causes some difficulty in analysis. The world is neither perfect nor easy to explain. Likewise, the variables are neither pure in a scientific sense nor do they operate in a controlled environment. However, it is possible to use a structured approach to aid in objectivity. As each proposition is reviewed, the method will be to show how the variables are linked and then to see whether rigorous analysis supports the thesis. The analysis of the propositions will allow a thorough review of the proposed strategy.

CHAPTER III: POLITICAL FORCES

P1) European NATO countries may be expected to continue political support of NATO strategy. Despite the debate on defense policy and the inherent difficulty of achieving a consensus, NATO has the capability to provide a firm, unified response to Soviet actions or intentions.

The arguments for this proposition follow from 40 years of freedom despite frequent differences. The raison d'etre of NATO, to defend Europe based on the perceived common threat of the Soviet Union, is agreed upon by virtually every political party on the continent, even those on the left (1). The recovery from WWII produced vibrant democracies which have shown a readiness in varying degrees to follow a course of self-determination based on national interest. The unifying threads have been a fear of the ominous threat from the East and shared western, liberal democratic values. However, Gorbachev's new glasnost/perestroika initiatives are changing the perception of the threat. He has taken the initiative for arms reductions, and for now he has won the admiration of many Europeans and Americans as well. While the key role played by the US is recognized in Europe (2), proposition P1 must take into account the changing perceptions of the threat.

Support for NATO has not meant Europe always follows the US lead in foreign policy. Indeed, there is a vastly different geopolitical perspective from Bonn than from Washington, DC, and what complicates matters is that perceptions change from Bonn to Paris to London. The political willingness of Europe to assert itself may be seen in a

review of post war actions. The French withdrawal from military integration into NATO was an early crisis now curiously juxtaposed with growing French-German defense cooperation today, although the De Gaulle legacy was to prepare Europe for a day the US may pull away. The West German ability to develop a potent armed force without a powerful profile, then develop a doctrine at divergence with US doctrine for defensive employment, is another example of independent and pragmatic thinking. The debates on support for Flexible Response, SALT II, INF deployment and sanctions against USSR "adventurism" in Afghanistan are still more examples of burgeoning and robust European democratic governments with their own national and European viewpoints (3). Western Europe's interests both converge and vary by country with the US. This should not surprise us, but it often does.

Despite great economic, social and political problems from time to time, Britain, France and West Germany have all developed impressive and -by reputation- well trained and capable armed forces which comprise the largest share of the European contribution to conventional defense (4). This is evidence of governments committed to defense. However, as a counter-point, the debate in the 1980's on burden sharing has indicated most European countries have not met spending quotas and, therefore, have not pulled their fair share of the defense burden by this measurement (5). One must recognize that the burden sharing issue is a thorny one, and there is more to a defense contribution than the budget share. As relates to political will, the key nations have shown the will to develop capable armed forces; however, the US has urged them to do more. Thus, the debate ensues on how much is enough. Although an

arguable point, the political will to meet defense needs has been demonstrated repeatedly.

While NATO remains a capable defensive alliance and the European governments have evidenced robust democratic politics, this does not mean those governments necessarily advocate a robust defense or converge with the US on defense issues central to the alliance. Often members of the alliance are at odds. Political analysts in the 1980's have identified a "crisis of cohesion" in NATO (6). In the late 1960's the interest in defense issues was relatively low. With the advent of Soviet nuclear parity and a perceived increase of the threat in the 1970's, political parties began to reflect a greater interest in defense issues. More than a few crises between European NATO and the US demonstrate the extent of the often heated debate. Some examples are the failure to ratify SALT II, the INF deployment controversy, the Mansfield Amendment, the Neutron bomb decision, US opposition to the Soviet-European gas pipeline, variance in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a US threatened pullout in reaction to the burden sharing issue in 1984 (7), and the European shock at Reagan's zero option proposal at Reykjavik (8).

The Federal Republic of Germany, now apparently moving into a phase of postwar maturity, is showing signs of a significant reaction to the potential for a US shift in global strategy. For example, in response to the Fred C. Ikle blue ribbon panel report, "Discriminate Deterrence," which advocates a less Eurocentric view, some conservative West Germans are responding negatively. The Allgemeine Zeitung, considered to be a

reliable reflection of conservative Government thinking, recently described the Ikle report as driving at the "heart of NATO" and implying an end of America's "nuclear guarantee" (9). As a positive note, this kind of thinking brings about closer cooperation with France and a realization that NATO must do more for itself. However, it can also lead toward disunity and destabilization.

From a cohesion point of view, it is becoming clear that intra-European unity movements are not faring very well. Some analysts say this is because Europe has no deep rooted popular identity with unification (10). Both in NATO and in other organizations such as the European Economic Community, the rule has been that nations follow national rather than European interests. Low voter turnout in the European Parliament elections of 1984 is an example (11). The national interest priority of nations is one reason which explains the difficulty of getting a consensus on defense policy.

However, despite these difficulties there have been some positive actions where NATO is concerned. For example, the Bonn Summit of 1982, the difficult agreement on INF deployment, the increased French role, cooperation on exercises, improved interoperability, and improved arms cooperation are all indicators of the alliance's ability to cooperate (12). The advent of the Long Term Defense Program in 1985, subsequent adoption of the Conceptual Military Framework, and Conventional Defense Improvements are also promising efforts by the alliance to increase unity (13). While there are some successes, achieving cohesion remains a challenge.

Even though all political parties support NATO, the leftward drift of North European labor and social parties has been the result of changing perceptions about NATO defense policies in the 1980's. But this has not undermined security. Instead, the curious combination of conservative and centrist parties holding the line on defense in West Germany and Great Britain, along with socialists in Italy and France adopting strong defense policies, has meant relative defense continuity (14). European socialists tend to criticize strong defense policy when out of power, then adopt an even stronger stance when in power. But defense policy has often been a near run thing with INF deployment, for instance, barely gaining acceptance in most countries. It is tough to convince the people in a democracy that deploying more nuclear weapons of a certain type decreases the probability of nuclear war. The key points are: most opposition parties support defense in the NATO context, defense issues are sensitive, and consensus is difficult to obtain among democratic republics.

The only possibility for a radical change in defense may be the Green Party in the Federal Republic of Germany, which advocates nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from NATO without increasing conventional defense. They seek an accommodation with the Soviets. While they have an influence on the left leaning SPD, the SPD itself supports NATO and current spending. However, the SPD also has a tendency to question NATO assumptions (15). The interesting views of Kartsten Voight, a prominent German analyst on the left, reflect a scholarly tenor to this endeavor and are essentially of a conservative flavor. For example, he advocates making conventional deterrence strong enough to render the results of

Warsaw Pact aggression incalculable (16). For the present and near term future there appears to be little threat of political forces causing an abrupt move to the left on defense. On the contrary, European political forces indicate strong support for NATO despite periodic policy differences.

The critical analysis of the first proposition shows it to be supported. While it is evident that European NATO governments firmly support NATO, it is also clear that the support is not unified on a given course of action. Further, external factors such as out of area issues and the changing perception of the Soviet threat have an impact. Cohesion is not easy to attain. To its credit NATO is trying to improve the consensus making process, and NATO members, who may often disagree among themselves on policy, have repeatedly shown the determination to meet the Warsaw Pact challenge. Further, even on the European Left, there is support for NATO and support for a strong conventional defense.

CHAPTER IV: ECONOMICS, THE THREAT AND BURDEN SHARING

P2) European NATO is economically capable of increasing defense capability but is unlikely to meet goals consistently. The US carries a disproportionate share of the spending burden, has met quotas but may not meet them in the future. Some European countries do better than others, often meet spending goals and, by measures other than spending, they share the defense adequately. Current defense spending is unlikely to increase substantially, although moderate European increases are possible.

Can we even doubt European capability? The European Economic Community alone is an enormous entity. In 1984 its GDP was two thirds of the US and greater than that of the USSR. Its exports were larger than those of the US and its population was greater (1). Western Europe is one of the world's greatest manufacturing, technical and scientific centers. Its combined military strength potential and equipment are formidable. If translated into military power, this could cause the Soviet Union to cease to be a threat (2). Table 1 compares GDP for NATO and Warsaw Pact for 1986.

T A B L E 1 (3)

1986 - GDP/GNP NATO VS WARSAW PACT

(In billions of 1980 U.S. dollars)

<u>NATO</u>	<u>GNP</u>	<u>WARSAW PACT</u>	<u>GNP/GDP</u>
U.S.A.	4,168.9	U.S.S.R	1,950.0*
W. EUR.	3,041.5	E. EUR.	600.3*
TOTAL	7,210.4		2,550.3*
<u>FRANCE</u>	<u>695.0</u>		
TOTAL	7,905.0	(* estimated, see note 3)	

A review of this chart shows that NATO economic potential far exceeds that of the Warsaw Pact. Indeed, one can only call this comparison astonishing. Despite economic difficulties such as inflation, a European recession, and the high cost of technology, it is apparent that European NATO countries have the capability to meet defense costs. However, economic capability must be combined with the willingness to use it in order to ensure the means of an increased defense strategy.

Since the mid 1970's in response to the growing Soviet threat, there has been a continual effort to improve and share defense spending in Europe, but it has fallen short. In 1979, NATO members agreed to a "Three Per Cent Solution" which would provide steady increases of three per cent annually across the board. The three percent solution met considerable political difficulties and was not consistently met by some allies (4). More recently, General Rodgers, as SACEUR, called on all nations to increase spending by four per cent of GNP level annually for six years, and they agreed (5). However, only the US and a few others succeeded. Actual expenditures by each country since 1975 in five year intervals are shown at Table 2 for NATO related expenditures.

T A B L E 2 (6)NATO DEFENSE EXPENDITURES

(In billions of 1980 US dollars and as pct of GDP)

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1985</u>
BELGIUM	\$ 3.3/3.1%	\$ 4.0/3.3%	\$ 3.4/2.9%
CANADA	\$ 4.1/1.9%	\$ 5.0/1.9%	\$ 6.2/2.2%
DENMARK	\$ 1.5/2.5%	\$ 1.6/2.4%	\$ 1.6/2.2%
FRANCE	\$21.7/3.8%	\$26.4/4.0%	\$28.0/4.1%
FRG	\$25.2/3.7%	\$26.7/3.3%	\$26.7/3.2%
GREECE	\$ 2.3/6.8%	\$ 2.3/5.7%	\$ 3.0/7.1%
ITALY	\$ 7.7/2.5%	\$ 9.6/2.4%	\$11.4/2.7%
LUX	\$.04/0.9%	\$.05/1.0%	\$.06/0.9%
NETHLND	\$ 4.8/3.2%	\$ 5.3/3.1%	\$ 5.3/3.1%
NORWAY	\$ 1.4/3.2%	\$ 1.7/2.9%	\$ 2.0/3.1%
PORTGL	\$ 1.1/5.3%	\$ 0.9/3.5%	\$ 0.8/3.2%
SPAIN	\$ 4.1/2.1%	\$ 5.1/2.4%	\$ 4.9/2.2%
TURKEY	\$ 3.1/6.3%	\$ 2.7/4.7%	\$ 3.2/4.5%
UK	\$25.4/5.2%	\$26.9/5.0%	\$30.2/5.2%
USA	\$139.5/5.8%	\$162.4/6.0%	\$208.8/6.9%

The comparison shows that some NATO members have fallen well short of their relative fair share of GNP goals. Others appear to have tried to meet the goals with occasional success. In relation to economic potential, the US is carrying by far the heaviest share of the burden. As an illustration, in the years after 1980 US spending increased by 6.25 percent annually while European levels grew by 1.45 percent (7).

It may be noted that if each country could raise its defense percentages of GNP to at least four percent while those above four percent hold the line, this would enable NATO to increase its expenditures dramatically (8). Furthermore, this kind of measure is easier to plan and assess than an annual increase. If the economy is growing at a steep rate, then an annual increase in defense spending may not be necessary.

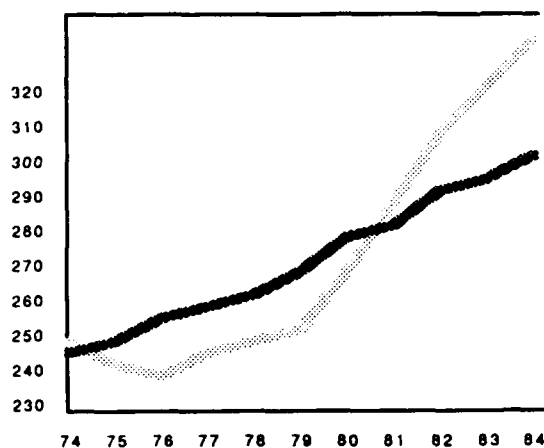
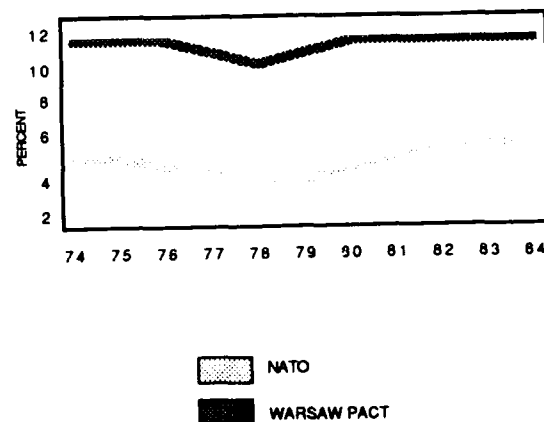
There are a number of reasons for the modest European increase of 1.45 percent vice the dramatic US increase of 6.25 percent. Low economic growth, generally declining populations, rising government debt and high social costs contributed to the problem as did a lower perception of the threat from European vice US perspective. One discouraging projection is that unless the threat is perceived to be overpowering, defense spending in Europe is likely to remain low and might even decline (9).

Lest this depressing thought end all review of the subject, one need only consider Europe's potential to realize that the capability is there to provide the means for improved conventional defense. Tables 3A-3B, compare the share of GNP/GDP spent by Warsaw Pact and NATO countries.

T A B L E 3 (10)

WARSAW PACT AND NATO DEFENSE SPENDING3A: MILITARY EXPENDITURES

(Billions of '83 \$)

3B: MILITARY EXPENDITURES/GNP

This comparison shows Warsaw Pact countries are willing to pay relatively more for defense than NATO. Compare these tables to NATO potential reflected in table 1, and it is clear that with modest increases NATO can match or even exceed Warsaw Pact defense spending at a lower opportunity cost to the economy.

The Western European governments have not met spending goals because they are mostly democracies, and the defense budget has been a political issue in a time of economic difficulties. There is also the matter of the decreasing threat perception. Despite glasnost, if the Soviet Union maintains or increases the threat and European countries perceive this, they will probably increase defenses. The concern is that this response may be too late or that some countries, especially the Federal Republic of Germany, may seek an accommodation (11). Germans vigorously deny this, but the concern remains (12).

While those governments not meeting quotas have acknowledged this, they have also taken a different approach to measuring defense contribution and have resented periodic excessive US pressure. For example, in response to the burden sharing debate of 1984, West Germany offered the following:

"In the 1970s European defense spending grew while the US declined. US costs are bloated by high personnel costs from the all volunteer force. The largest share (90 percent) of deployed active ground and air units are European (13)."

Europeans might also have taken us to task for the deplorable state of our post Viet Nam army. Only in the late Carter years did we decide to play catch-up in response to Soviet aggression in Afghanistan. As we entered the Reagan years we overspent on defense (thus the deficit) and expected others to follow suit. Now the US is facing severe defense budget cuts. Paradoxically, this may cause us to spend less just when we need to maintain our momentum.

These points and others in the burden sharing debate give some pause for reflection. To them one might add that we pay a lot for our naval and strategic forces, some of which may have little direct influence on a war in Europe. It may be said that defense spending has its pitfalls as a sole measure of burden sharing. General Rodgers' approach was to counsel for understanding and to encourage European support of a stronger defense rather than to threaten US withdrawal. This even-handed effort was well received by the allies (14).

Returning to the second proposition, it appears that Europe is capable but not yet willing to increase defenses, although small increases to meet previous stated goals should not be ruled out yet. Certainly, the capability to meet defense needs is overwhelmingly present. Unfortunately, trends and empirical evidence show that economic capability does not necessarily translate into defense spending. As for defense objectives and burden sharing, several observations are possible. First, setting goals for specific increases ignores economic problems. Second, what NATO ministers agree to may not achieve political support at home later on. Third, some countries have not met their burden share. Fourth, a better consensus on burden sharing is needed.

In conclusion to the second proposition, we may expect that gaining European support for increased conventional defense, the means of the strategy, will be difficult. At the same time it must be noted that the potential exists for a stronger European stance, and some European analysts have previously advocated strengthening the conventional deterrent as described in chapter III. With US leadership and a continuing effort to develop a consensus on defense spending, there is a slim chance that NATO members will meet spending goals. On the other hand, if we reduce our commitment, we risk a similar stance from the Europeans.

CHAPTER V: THE INF AGREEMENT AND TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

P3) The INF agreement will affect NATO's tactical nuclear weapons strategy and increase its importance. This will resurface the debate on credibility and modernization. Achieving a consensus for improvements will be difficult. As a result the likelihood of seeking negotiated reductions is increased.

As reported recently, expressions of broad support for the INF agreement among key Western and NATO leaders at a recent Munich conference have not masked differences over what course to follow on short range or tactical nuclear weapons. West German Chancellor Kohl told the conference that modernization of short range nuclear missiles should be linked to an agreement on a reduction in their numbers. Since a probable Reagan administration assumption to support INF was based on the 1983 NATO agreement to upgrade tactical nuclear missiles, Mr. Kohl's position put him at odds with the US, Great Britain and France (1). In a related report, Mr. Kohl is said to have spurned the idea of eliminating tactical nuclear weapons in a "zero option" but demanded negotiations for balanced ceilings. He reportedly declined to say whether his government would stand by a 1983 NATO decision to modernize 88 short range Lance missiles (2).

These reports serve to highlight several points. First, the INF agreement has meaning beyond INF reductions. One aspect is to focus attention on tactical nuclear missiles. The origin of the controversial INF upgrade-deployment was in part a reinforcement of the relatively

weak NATO tactical nuclear deterrent. The Pershing II and Cruise missile deployments were also in response to Soviet deployment of SS 20's. The West Germans now want negotiating priority on tactical nuclear systems because of the disparity between East and West and because of a recurring German complaint that the shorter range tactical nuclear weapons would primarily be used on German soil (3).

Unfortunately, the INF agreement uncovers the weakness of NATO's theater nuclear forces. Unclassified Military Balance, 1987-88 statistics on theater nuclear weapons show the Warsaw Pact to have a clear advantage in total numbers of systems. For example, in short range ballistic missiles, from the Atlantic to the Urals (including French systems), the Warsaw Pact advantage will be an amazing 1489 to 261 or 5.7 to 1 when 72 Pershing 1A missiles are removed as part of the INF agreement. The Warsaw Pact advantage in land based air, nuclear systems is about 1.5 to 1, and in artillery it is about 2.3 to 1 (4).

Aside from the disparity in numbers, another major problem with NATO tactical nuclear weapons is credibility of employment. If credibility is low, aggression might be risked by an adversary in a crisis.

The first credibility problem is one of storage. Especially relative to Warsaw Pact forces, storage sites in the West are not spread out and are relatively easily targeted. The second problem is that the weapons are now surpassed by Soviet capabilities considered superior by most analysts. Third, they are often identified for dual purpose

delivery means. Prior to a nuclear release this will probably tie up conventional logistical and tactical capabilities to standby or to relocate nuclear systems. Finally, the ability to get the weapons dispersed or into position prior to preemptive destruction by the Warsaw Pact is also a credibility problem (5).

Unfortunately, the mixing of conventional and nuclear forces also creates a high degree of crisis instability as the other side tries to determine when and where nuclear forces will be used. Ambiguity might reign. At the very time a tactical nuclear weapon would be usable, the likelihood of having release is low. Once release authority is received, the battle might well be lost (6).

Still, the argument is often made that tactical nuclear weapons are part of the deterrent, and removal would mean increased reliance on conventional forces which are not up to the task (7). Important to the argument supporting tactical nuclear weapons is the idea of uncertainty. If the Warsaw Pact is uncertain about when and how we would employ tactical nuclear weapons, then this uncertainty itself has a deterrent effect. If we accept that uncertainty on use of nuclear weapons has some advantages, it would seem to be wiser to build on this by having strong conventional forces rather than having forces not up to par. The best alternative appears to be the certainty of a strong conventional defense and the uncertainty of use of nuclear weapons.

A common European perspective, based on images of two world wars fought largely on European soil, has been to accept tactical nuclear weapons on the grounds that deterring any war is better than having a

conventional war (8). Further, a tactical nuclear deterrent helps to couple European defense to the US strategic nuclear deterrent. This logic probably lies behind Chancellor Kohl's refusal to consider a zero option. Finally, significant increases in Soviet tactical nuclear weapons and a Soviet strategy to be prepared to use them at some point, have required retention of tactical nuclear weapons (9).

The paradox of tactical nuclear weapons in the opinion of this author is that neither side is really prepared to fight on a nuclear battlefield, although both sides say they are. Our dilemma is that nuclear weapons have been the best modern deterrent of war, yet resorting to them would lead to immense devastation limited only by one's imagination. It is difficult to separate tactical from strategic nuclear weapons in this context, and it is difficult if not impossible to see any warfighting value of these weapons, particularly with the advent of precision munitions.

When units have gone to the field to train, a considerable amount of time has been spent contending with simulated chemical attacks by comparison to nuclear attacks. Occasionally, a nuclear explosion is simulated off on a flank somewhere, but when one faces this issue directly, self protection, radiological monitoring, reporting, dispersal or avoidance have been about all a tactical unit could do on the nuclear battlefield. From a "tactical" point of view, nuclear weapons have been much more of a deterrent than a true war fighting tool.

The Soviets, who are masters of survival on the chemical

battlefield, seem to have recognized they face the same problems as NATO on the nuclear battlefield. This may have caused them in recent years to back away from their aggressive sounding tactical nuclear strategy of the 1970's (10). For now and in the foreseeable future, neither side is prepared to fight for long on the nuclear battlefield.

The choices for NATO are to modernize and increase the tactical nuclear deterrent, to try for an arms agreement, or to strengthen conventional forces. Some combination of these options will be necessary to ensure deterrence. NATO's current very limited modernization progress, as in the Lance upgrade, will help to redress the imbalance, but the Soviets have already updated their FROG and SCUD missiles and hold a considerable edge in total capability. Unfortunately, the costs of developing a truly credible tactical nuclear force, which addresses the problems cited here, may be assumed to be very high. The opportunity cost will probably be in conventional forces. A better approach would be to strengthen conventional forces and make modest improvements in theater nuclear forces, while encouraging reductions.

From this analysis it is apparent that the INF agreement has put increased pressure and attention on theater nuclear weapons. While they are a component of deterrence, it is due to uncertainty of allied use more than their utility or credibility. NATO should seek reduction of these weapons in lieu of modernization. If this course is not successful, NATO should continue modernization. In the meantime, the theater nuclear gap will leave NATO with a deterrence dilemma unless conventional defenses are increased.

CHAPTER VI: THE INF AGREEMENT AND CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

P4) The INF agreement, the tactical nuclear weapons debate and the perceived force imbalance will increase the value of the conventional deterrent. This will help cause renewed NATO efforts to correct the conventional imbalance. However, to make sufficient progress will require a NATO consensus, which will be difficult to achieve.

Signs of the INF agreement linkage to conventional forces have caused official support for increased conventional defenses. In recent testimony the Army Chief of Staff, General Vuono, concurred with the INF agreement but emphasized the need for an associated increase of conventional defense capability. The new SACEUR, General Galvin, also emphasized the need to reduce the conventional imbalance in light of the INF treaty (1). Just as the INF agreement has highlighted the tactical nuclear weapons problem, it has also reminded everyone of the conventional force shortfall.

That the Warsaw Pact has an edge in conventional forces is no secret. However, not everyone agrees on the precise scope of the imbalance. Post war NATO strategy into the 1970's was to use our nuclear superiority to deter a conventional attack. Then the Soviets achieved nuclear parity while continuing to build conventional forces. In 1986, SACEUR rounded the threat off to at least "2:1 in virtually every category" (2).

A review of several sources, of which Military Balance appears to be the most often cited, gives a clear conventional edge to the Warsaw Pact and supports SACEUR's assertion. In some areas the Warsaw Pact far exceeds the 2:1 advantage. Table 4 shows a few illustrative comparisons of weapons systems which are key to offensive operations.

T A B L E 4 (3)

SELECTED GROUND FORCE EQUIPMENT

	<u>NATO GUIDELINES AREA</u>		<u>ATLANTIC TO URALS</u>	
	<u>NATO</u>	<u>WP</u>	<u>NATO</u>	<u>WP</u>
MAIN BTL TANKS	12,700	18,000	22,200	52,200
MICV	3,400	8,000	4,200	25,800
ARTILLERY	3,600	9,500	11,100	37,000
ATGW (GROUND)	6,500	4,500	10,100	16,600
ARMED HELO.	550	430	780	1,630

"Defense reformers" argue the balance based on the NATO technological edge, the clear advantage we have in fighting ships and Atlantic geo-strategy. They even argue about the data claiming Department of Defense exaggerations. The DOD assessment, which may be assumed to be conservative and not exaggerated, is essentially in line with Military Balance. DOD gives the clear edge in numbers and capability to the Warsaw Pact (4). DOD allows that we do still have a technological edge, although there is a lot of concern about the drain of technology to the USSR and the Soviet intent to surpass our

technology with new systems in the next twenty years. The trend is that the Soviets have narrowed the technology gap so that NATO has only a narrow edge.

Military Balance, 1987-1988, qualifies the static force equation by emphasizing its pitfalls as a measurement tool and declining to make a judgement on the overall balance. They do support the claim of a clear edge in land forces to the Warsaw Pact. Yet they qualify the data by stating that aggression would be "a high risk option for either side with unpredictable consequences, particularly where the possibility of nuclear escalation exists "(5). This independent analysis is probably pretty close to the predominant European view and a classic formulation of just what deterrence is! On the other hand it fails to account for the apparent assymetry of land power in the Warsaw Pact favor. For example, it is evident that the Warsaw Pact has a better chance of conventional success than does NATO and also has the edge in theater nuclear capability.

There has been considerable debate in the US on determining the balance of forces. To add to the confusion, US Senator Carl Levin of the Armed Forces Committee has just released a report which reportedly indicates the military has been exaggerating the threat all along. For instance, he shows the central region tank ratio to be only 1.4 to 1 rather than over 2 to 1 in favor of Warsaw Pact (6). This finding is probably based on the change cited in Military Balance and is correct only if you count French and Spanish forces in what is called the "NATO guidelines area."

Such reports must be qualified by additional information. For instance, in the "Atlantic to Urals" area the tank ratio is 2.4 to 1 (7). Even though the static balance has its pitfalls, it is possible to conclude that the Soviets have a substantial edge; however, their advantage is not overwhelming.

There are other problems with the NATO conventional deterrent which go beyond a static force comparison. Some key ones are low stockpiles of ammunition, the questionable ability to react to a surprise attack, chemical weapons deficiencies, the lack of common doctrine and sustainability problems for a conflict past 30 days (8). These are all areas where the Warsaw Pact has distinct advantages which should be considered when assessing the balance.

What about trends? Table 5 shows that the Warsaw Pact is outbuilding NATO in ground forces materiel produced by a wide margin.

T A B L E 5 (9)

PRODUCTION OF GROUND FORCES MATERIEL

EQUIPMENT TYPE	<u>WARSAW PACT AND NATO</u>					
	WARSAW PACT			NATO***		
	1984	1985	1986	1984	1985	1986
TANKS	3,600	3,700	3,700	1,600	1,800	1,000
AFV*	5,000	4,700	4,120	2,500	2,700	2,400
ARTILLERY	3,450	3,550	2,950	700	850	450
MRLS**	1,000	800	575	75	75	500
AIR DEFENSE	275	335	350	75	25	0

(*AFV: Armored fighting vehicles; **MRLS: Multiple rocket launchers)

Similar trends exist for other types of defense material production. These trends indicate the conventional gap is likely to widen in the next few years, not to narrow as defense reformers would lead one to believe.

In spite of higher rates of production, the Warsaw Pact spends less than NATO. This is in part because relative costs in the West are higher and because our strategy is to dominate the seas and contain the USSR. In 1986, NATO spent about \$420 billion compared to about \$300 Billion for Warsaw Pact (10). Since they are producing land power at a higher rate we must conclude they are doing it more cheaply.

About the force balance these observations may be made. The Warsaw Pact has the edge in total force by about 2:1 and higher in some areas such as artillery and armored fighting vehicles. NATO has a slim technological edge and the economic resources to improve its defenses. However, the Warsaw Pact forces are growing faster than NATO, and the technology gap is disappearing. NATO has built the perception that its forces, although smaller, are well trained and technologically superior, and this helps compensate for the Warsaw Pact conventional edge; however, the assessment of most analysts beginning with SACEUR is that this is not enough.

So long as NATO sustains a high state of readiness the Warsaw Pact force ratio advantage is not enough to ensure success in the near future. On the other hand, because of the disparity in conventional capability, NATO's conventional deficiencies cause reliance on the

first use of nuclear weapons. Would it not make more sense to have conventional parity? Then the opportunity for Warsaw Pact battlefield success is reduced even further. Presumably, NATO would not be threatening to the Warsaw Pact so long as both sides remain ready. Further, NATO would not have to rely on nuclear weapons to offset the conventional disparity.

In assessing this proposition it is important to see the juxtaposition of the three variables : the INF agreement, the tactical nuclear weapons situation and the conventional force imbalance. The probability that they will combine to influence the argument for an increase in NATO conventional defense capability is likely, although it is mitigated by the qualifications identified in the previous conclusions, such as political considerations, the US-Soviet thaw and the reduced threat perception. Also, economic conditions work against increased defense spending despite the enormous potential of Western Europe. In an era of glasnost, economic problems and policy differences will combine to work against increasing defense expenditures. The Europeans may opt for a " less than 2:1 is good enough" solution, even though the situation calls for reducing the Soviet advantage. It will take strong leadership and effective consensus building to overcome this obstacle and increase the conventional deterrent.

A strong conventional defense could be the foundation for achieving force reductions. It appears Gorbachev will continue to stress economic progress in the Soviet Union. To really make headway he will need to

decrease defense outlays. Thus, there is an opportunity to achieve conventional parity in Europe. For asymmetrical conventional reductions to occur, however, Western European resolve must not falter. As with the intermediate range missiles deployment several years ago, if Europeans demonstrate the will to achieve a strong, symmetrical conventional defense and if the US retains its key role, then the Soviets will be much more likely to see the value in conventional reductions.

The analysis of proposition P4 shows that the INF agreement, the tactical nuclear weapons debate and the perceived conventional force imbalance will increase the value of the conventional deterrent. While this might help cause renewed NATO efforts to correct the conventional imbalance, it will take strong US leadership to build a consensus. The Europeans will need to see the value in such an approach. The increase of defensive capability with shared contributions, as previously called for by SACEUR, could achieve this goal.

CHAPTER VII: A NATO DOCTRINE FOR CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE

P5) A combined NATO conventional doctrine could further consensus for improved conventional forces as a key component of that doctrine. The application of a strong, symmetrical conventional NATO defense doctrine, which assures parity with the Warsaw Pact and is linked to nuclear deterrence, could reduce crisis instability and improve overall NATO deterrence.

Various aspects of the conventional defense proposition have received considerable debate in the past few years. One impetus for increasing conventional defenses that we have already seen is to reduce reliance on the tactical nuclear deterrent. It has also been shown that there is a conventional imbalance of about 2:1, although this is not an insurmountable or overwhelming advantage. The question here is whether increased conventional power vis a vis the Warsaw Pact can raise the nuclear threshold and whether it can be clearly linked to nuclear deterrence. One problem with demonstrating the effect of a strong conventional pillar has been the lack of a combined operational and tactical doctrine for use of conventional forces. Returning to the analogy of a ship in a brewing storm, a strong conventional doctrine followed by conventional improvements would be a policy course which could weather changing Soviet designs and ensuing NATO debates.

Several years ago the US Army tried to get at this issue by introducing AirLand Battle doctrine which was received with some

controversy in Europe due to the prospect of cross border operations and other perceptions. Even though the strategy was defensive, the emphasis on the offense caused the force to look offensive, fed Soviet paranoia and concerned Europeans. It was the US Army's best way to fight outnumbered and win, but its effect was viewed as offensive. Some associated it with Samuel Huntington's argument for a strategy aimed at liberating East Germany and Czechoslovakia in the event of war. This approach has no support in Western Europe (1). As we have seen, alliance strategy must be capable of building a consensus.

More palatable to the Europeans has been SACEUR's proposal for Follow On Forces Attack or FOFA. Both AirLand Battle and FOFA take the fight to the enemy. Indeed, the two approaches are quite similar except that cross border operations are more often associated with AirLand Battle (ALB), and FOFA is at the operational level of war. The development of a NATO combined conventional concept along these lines, but politically feasible and not provocative to the Soviets, would be a good direction to provide the basis for a combined doctrine and, accordingly, an increase in conventional strength.

Unfortunately, in NATO there is little evidence of a tactical combined doctrine. NATO defines a NATO "operational level" doctrine, but "tactical level" doctrine (in this sense how army groups and below fight) is left to each nation with a few general guidelines. For example, the basis of the strategy is forward defense based ultimately

on the nuclear guarantee. Thus, forward defense becomes the doctrine. NATO guidance divides the battlefield into covering force, main battle and rear areas. Within each area, commanders follow national doctrine which goes down to corps and in some cases division level. Doctrine varies for each nation from the extreme of a US aggressive, offensive-oriented defense (AirLand Battle) to Belgium platoon and company strong points. From allied corps to allied corps doctrine varies (2). One must suspect the true ability to achieve army group unity of effort.

It follows that NATO ought to consider a combined doctrine to improve conventional defensive warfighting and to provide a basis for a consensus on defense. To facilitate analysis here, a variation of AirLand Battle doctrine will be proposed as an operational and tactical concept for NATO. It is intended to be politically suitable and sufficiently aggressive to win. On the other hand it is clearly a defensive strategy.

The proposed concept calls for offensive action as does AirLand Battle, but bases it on an initial defense in depth posture and a general parity in opposing force capability, which allows the defender to build up strong reserves. FOFA as now envisioned is part of the concept. The defense in depth allows the the army group and theater commanders to identify and slow the main Soviet Western TVD effort. Large reserves at corps and army group level would be assembled and then used to deliver a counterstroke after the commitment of Soviet

reserves. Corps would not fight independently but as part of a cohesive army group plan.

If roughly one-half of the force is defending, then the other half is available to counter attack. Economy of force measures could build even larger reserves. An improved and solely conventional FOFA capability would target Soviet reserves and their support. Cross border maneuvers would be undertaken only upon the agreed direction of the political leadership and only in order to attain the key objectives: destruction of invading forces, restoration of boundaries and limitation of collateral damage. With a strong conventional defense, the early first use of nuclear weapons could be declared ruled out as a variation of our present First Use policy. Ultimately, we might even be able to take the moral high ground and advocate "No First Use."

Some might argue that wars have been lost with a one to one advantage, and they would be correct. History is replete with examples such as Napoleon who often fought outnumbered and won. Thus, we should not reduce readiness, training or technology developments to name three areas where we are strong. We should correct weaknesses beyond the force ratio such as sustainability and the readiness of reserves. A ready army can win at one to one and lower. When Hitler invaded the USSR at less than one to one, he overwhelmed the Soviets with a superior fighting force and nearly destroyed them. The Russians learned quickly and Stalingrad became the turning point. Later, in their last major

level. Their potential use would be politically guaranteed to allies by our presence and our doctrine. This fact would be spelled out to the adversary early in the crisis. Some nuclear weapons systems should be in theater. They need not be "strategic" nor invite such a response. Linkage could also be made to a small tactical nuclear force so long as that is still present, although it should be renamed an operational nuclear force and separated from tactical forces to allow crisis stability. Our intent to employ this force would consider and expect retaliation in kind or even escalation to a new level. The strategy is still flexible response, but it is changed from primary reliance on nuclear deterrence to primary reliance on conventional parity.

The strong conventional defense approach would appear to have a great potential for acceptance among our allies, particularly the West Germans, who would probably welcome a strong conventional pillar to the deterrent coupled to reduced tactical nuclear weapons. One key to acceptance would be retaining the link to the nuclear deterrent (3). The other key is achieving a consensus on defense expenditures. The apparent benefits of the strong conventional strategy might provide the basis for consensus.

The proposed operational concept has attempted to provide a politically suitable departure from forward defense to a concept based

on AirLand Battle and FOFA. The strong conventional deterrent concept becomes possible only when we begin to approach parity with the Warsaw Pact. This produces a conventional war fighting strategy which has a chance for consensus and a high probability of success. Further, the doctrinal threat to the other side would be reduced despite a relative increase in NATO's defense capability. In turn, they would have the same high probability of success in the event of a NATO attack on the Warsaw Pact (not unimaginable to the other side).

Implementation would require the conventional deterrence rung of NATO's flexible response strategy to be strengthened and to be given credibility. Agreement on the concept and the development of combined doctrine would help along the effort to increase defense spending. By providing a linkage to operational nuclear forces and by having conventional parity, the opponent is discouraged from risking a conventional war.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Any review of NATO issues has a tendency to raise as many questions as it answers. To keep this tendency to a minimum, this particular analysis has followed a rigid format using a series of propositions which show causal relationships having to do with critical variables. In selecting the variables the attempt has been to deal with some of the most crucial defense issues facing the alliance. In the analysis of the last proposition on a combined NATO tactical concept, a somewhat different approach is taken by stating a strawman concept and illustrating how it could be used to unify alliance strategy. In writing it an effort has been made to follow a tactical, operational and political course which has a chance for consensus, a key element in any NATO strategy. Generally, the thesis appears to hold to our scrutiny with some qualification.

Thesis: The US should take the lead in building a consensus for a strong conventional deterrent and defense capability which assures parity with the Warsaw Pact and is coupled to nuclear deterrence.

The primary qualification is that it will be difficult to achieve a consensus on increasing defense spending. In an environment of a perceived decreasing threat, it will be essential for the alliance to correctly assess the threat and to show no sign of a weakening resolve. One of the best ways to do this is to revisit the previous spending consensus now apparently abandoned. The US, along with the countries

which have most closely approached spending goals (notably Great Britain, France and West Germany), could provide the leadership to overcome this obstacle--especially if they could agree on a strong conventional strategy.

We should recognize the situation in Europe as analagous to a brewing storm, one which we must find and follow a steady course for NATO. We must accept obstacles to cohesion and a tendency for independent political action by NATO members. We should build on the tendency for military cooperation. Before a specific strategy is proposed, the US must first assess national interests and then work in a combined forum to develop a consensus on a warfighting concept and doctrine which has a chance for NATO consensus. From this challenging effort, an improved combined strategy can be developed.

Considering the various perceptions of the threat, the US must take the lead. A consensus on increasing defense expenditures is essential and doable, although difficult. Agreement on a combined doctrine should help to overcome opposition in an environment of decreasing nuclear weapons. It is both possible and desirable for NATO to link a strong conventional defense strategy to a nuclear deterrent. The means to this strategy is a renewed commitment to spending levels which more equitably share the costs of defense as previously agreed upon by NATO ministers.

Achieving a consensus on a strong conventional defense strategy is difficult but possible if the US provides the leadership, and the tangible aim is a strategy which ultimately reduces the NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation. As the will of individual NATO members may falter or veer in a dangerous direction in the coming months, a consensus now on strengthening conventional defenses can put the NATO alliance in a position with a strength of purpose along a course which can weather any storm.

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3

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